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THE METHODISTS IN EUROPE

Insistent demand for information made necessary the publication of this book before full intelligence was available concerning what happened to the churches in Europe during the war. The purpose is not to depict the devastation wrought, which was great and terrible, but to describe in general terms the status of The Methodist Church in the various countries. As information is received it will be incorporated in later editions. Figures are from pre-war reports.

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THE METHODISTS IN EUROPE

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Joint Division of Education and Cultivation
Board of Missions and Church Extension
General Section
THE METHODIST CHURCH
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A CHURCH TOTALLY DESTROYED BY ENEMY FIRE. METHODIST CHURCHES ARE IN MOST CITIES MENTIONED IN EUROPEAN WAR DISPATCHES. MANY HAVE BEEN DESTROYED.

The Methodists in Europe

There are conferences of The Methodist Church in seventeen nations on the continent of Europe. These are the Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Norway, and Sweden), the Baltic States (Esthonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), Germany, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Finland, Switzerland, Poland, Jugoslavia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Spain, and Italy.

Before the war there were approximately 1,800 churches with more than 100,000 members and 110 institutions. North Africa is bracketed with Europe because of the affiliations of North Africa with France.

Europe is not regarded as a "mission field." In most of the countries Methodism is indigenous and not the result of missionary effort, and in normal times it was self-supporting or nearly so. The European conferences are parts of The Methodist Church. The financial aid given to them is by no means comparable to the missionary appropriations made to the annual conferences in the United States.

Central and Southern Europe and North Africa are under the episcopal supervision of Bishop Paul N. Garber, resident in Geneva.

Northern Europe is administered by Bishop Raymond J. Wade.

Bishop F. H. Otto Melle, of Berlin, is in charge of the conferences in Germany.

In Denmark, Norway, and Sweden Methodism originated, not in the countries themselves, but in the United States.

In 1845 a mission for Scandinavian sailors in New York harbor was established on an old ship, called "Bethelship." Bethelship converts not only carried Methodism back to their native countries, but also to the middle western section of the United States. By 1924 it was said that Bethelship had been responsible for twelve conferences and one district, having 617 churches, 540 preachers, and 60,000 members.

Bethelship converts preaching in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden developed Methodist work in those countries. No foreign missionaries have ever worked in Scandinavia and Methodism was practically self-supporting before the war. There are about 500 churches with a membership of 25,000. Swedish Methodists have sent foreign missionaries to North Africa.

There are about thirty homes and ten hospitals and medical centers in the three countries. The Union Theological School at Gothenberg, Sweden, trains ministers using the Scandinavian languages.

The work in Scandinavia suffered during the war, but continued, in spite of the terrible situation. Reports told of the meeting of the conferences, worship in cold rooms and basements, and a remarkable continuation of successful evangelism and financial liberality.

The Theological Seminary received no students from the invaded countries. Suffering among the Methodist preachers and people has been severe.

THE BALTIC STATES AND FINLAND

Methodist work in the Baltic States was begun in 1904 while that section of the world was part of Russia. It originated at Kovno, in what is now Lithuania, under the preaching of a German who had been converted in America. The work spread and by 1907 reached what is now Esthonia, and in 1921 work was organized in Latvia.

THE LETTISH METHODIST CHURCH IN RIGA, LATVIA.

The Baltic and Slavic annual conference had 132 churches and 2,700 members before the war. It was practically self-supporting.

Methodism in Finland began in 1887 among the Swedish population under the preaching of two Swedish sailors converted in the United States. Two conferences were organized, one among the Swedes and another among the Finns. There are about 3,000 members. Here, as elsewhere in Northern Europe, the leadership was wholly national and no foreign missionaries were at work.

There are several Methodist institutions in Finland, including Concordia Hospital at Helsinki and eight homes and hostels elsewhere. There is a Methodist Theological Seminary in Helsinki which carries on instruction in the Finnish language.

The future of Methodism in the Baltic States and Finland is bound up with the future status of the countries themselves, and the attitude of Russia towards them and towards religious liberty, but since it is purely indigenous it may be expected to flourish.

METHODIST ORPHANAGE AT TYNEC, CZECHOSLOVAKIA. IT WAS OCCUPIED BY THE GERMAN INVADERS.

Methodist work in Czechoslovakia began as relief work in 1920. At the end of World War I there was a remarkable revival of evangelical faith. Some great Methodist churches developed, with large and enthusiastic congregations. In 1939 there were 31 churches with more than 2,000 actual members. Here is one of the most hopeful fields among all the European conferences.

When war was declared on the United States the only remaining missionary was interned but later was repatriated. Methodism continued its evangelistic work and the churches carried on. The exact situation and the extent of the property damage and general need awaits a careful survey.

Polish Methodism also grew out of relief work after World War I. There were 18 churches with 1,150 members.

When Poland was invaded the three missionaries were interned but were later repatriated. There was much suffering among the people. The new boundary lines and the difficulties of travel in the areas under Russian influence make the present status of the work uncertain.

There was a great Methodist headquarters building in downtown Warsaw, which before the war housed a large and self-supporting English language school. Warsaw was almost totally destroyed but the exact extent of the destruction has not been determined. During the war all or most of the churches carried on their ministry under the Polish preachers. If the post-war government is tolerant or friendly there should be a good growth in Polish Methodism.

THE METHODIST CENTRAL BUILDING IN DOWNTOWN WARSAW, POLAND. WARSAW WAS ALMOST COMPLETELY DESTROYED AND THIS BUILDING IS PROBABLY A TOTAL LOSS.

Belgium Methodism originated in 1920 in post-war relief work. Before the war there were 22 congregations and more than 1,000 members, with a central building and book-store in Brussels and colportage work centering in Antwerp. Four workers were classed as missionaries, although they were Europeans.

Three missionaries and one Belgian pastor were driven out by the Germans. One pastor died in prison. At the first conference after

THE METHODIST CHURCH AT HERSTAL IN BELGIUM, STRUCK BY A ROBOT BOMB.

victory one-third of those present had been in prison. There was much suffering but the churches remained open.

The church at Herstal was destroyed; the pastor's child was killed and his wife wounded. There was some other property damage of a less serious nature.

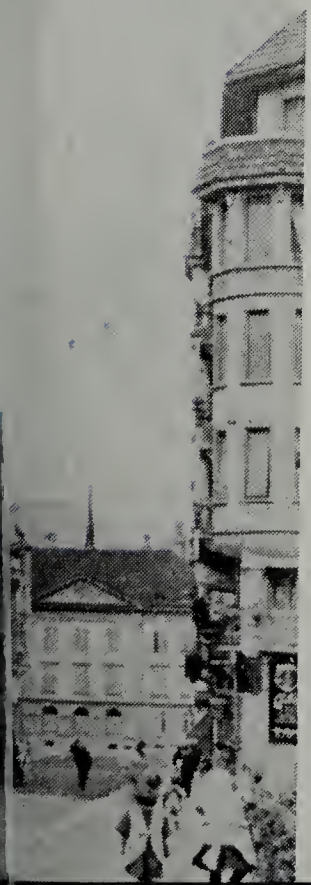
The superintendent has resumed work and the conference is in full operation with considerable success. "Methodism has a great opportunity in Belgium," wrote Bishop Garber. "Central church is the center of all Protestant activities in the nation. Help is needed for the relief of pastors and rebuilding of destroyed properties."

Methodist work in Switzerland is practically self-supporting. It has 250 congregations with nearly 13,000 members, a publishing house, three hospitals, and five homes and hostels for students, and the churches formerly supported some missionaries in foreign fields.

Considerable religious literature is published. Much of this was used in Germany until its use was banned by the Nazis. "Swiss Methodism believes in the printed page," writes Bishop Garber. There are six church periodicals and six book stores. The publishing house has no deficits.

The personnel is wholly national. During the war the conference met regularly under local leadership and all the work was carried on. Swiss preachers were formerly trained at the seminary in Germany and a professor was supported there, but during the war he was assigned to the seminary of the Basle Mission, where Methodists are now enrolled.

The war caused an acute financial problem. Prices soared but preachers' salaries increased little. Methodist refugees from the invaded countries brought demands upon the churches, which have made regular allowances to needy cases.



THE METHODIST CHURCH
AT LUCERNE, SWITZERLAND

The largest Methodist group in Europe is in Germany, where there are five annual conferences. The work is entirely self-supporting and the preachers are all nationals. At the beginning of the war there were approximately 900 churches with more than 45,000 members and 223 ordained preachers.

Methodism began in 1849 under the preaching of Rev. L. S. Jacoby, an immigrant converted in the United States and returned to his native land as an evangelist. The deaconess movement originated in Germany, where there are approximately 1,000 Methodist deaconesses. They are all trained nurses and they operate ten hospitals and clinics in the principal cities of Germany.

THE ONLY METHODIST CHURCH LEFT STANDING AT FRANKFURT-ON-MAIN, GERMANY. A PART OF THE FIRST FLOOR CAN BE USED.

There is an endowed theological seminary at Frankfort-on-Main which trained preachers for all the lands in which German is spoken. The Methodist Publishing House at Bremen housed a large and valuable Methodist historical library of books and manuscripts.

The war prostrated Methodism in Germany. Pastors and theological students were drafted into the army and many were killed, wounded and captured. Conference and district work was distrupted, but the churches carried on as well as they could.

Three-fourths of all the churches were destroyed or nearly so. Seven of the eight churches in Berlin were totally wrecked and the other badly damaged. In every city heard from the churches were struck.

The publishing house and its contents were totally obliterated. All, or nearly all, of the hospitals were bombed. The seminary was slightly damaged. All the destroyed property was erected without help from America.

The people are digging out of the ruins. Services are being held. The seminary opened with twelve students. Church funds are frozen in banks and there is much suffering. The churches carry on a little relief work.

All reports agree that an unprecedented opportunity for evangelism exists. The stricken German people, stripped of everything, are turning to religion and all services are crowded. Bishop Melle writes: "The Methodists seems to have an opportunity so great, so promising, as to surpass anything our fathers dreamed."

Methodist work is organized as the Spain Mission, but there have been no recent reports.

Uncertainty prevails with reference to Methodism in Spain and its future. The Church was never strong in that unfortunate country, and since the rise of the Franco dictatorship there has been persecution and virtual suppression of the whole evangelical movement. Restrictive measures rendered open evangelism practically impossible.

There are few Methodists in Spain. In 1920 the *Escuela Modelo,* a school for boys founded at Alicante by Francisco Albricias, was taken over by the Church. Civil war forced the school to close and the property was seized by the Spanish authorities and turned over to a local society of the *Falange Espanola Tradicionalesta,* the Franco political party. The Albricias brothers were driven out of the country, and are now working with the Methodist mission in North Africa.

It is not possible to predict the future of Methodism in Spain, since it will depend upon the nature of the Spanish government and its attitude toward religious liberty.

There is a small Methodist mission in Madeira, from which reports have been infrequent and indefinite. There were formerly a recreation center for sailors, a church at Funchal, the capital, and a few churches in the outlying towns. The actual membership is quite small and the future of the work in Madeira is to be determined after a future survey.

HUNGARY–JUGOSLAVIA
BULGARIA

Methodist work in Hungary is an extension of German Methodism. It was started in 1906 by Rev. F. H. Otto Melle, now Bishop in Germany. The last reports before the beginning of the war in 1939 showed 39 congregations and approximately 1,100 members.

In what is now Jugoslavia, Methodist work also started in connection with the work in Germany, and before the war consisted of 41 congregations with approximately 1,700 members. There is a church about seventy miles from Philippi, where Paul first preached in Europe, another the same distance from Thessalonica, and another eighty miles from Berea.

There is a Methodist Sanatorium at Novi Sad, which was protected by the Swiss consul, a Methodist.

The Church in both Hungary and Jugoslavia has been in a critical situation since American funds were cut off. Bishop Melle held conferences during the war but was not

AMERICAN SCHOOL FOR GIRLS, LOVECH, BULGARIA, OPERATED BY THE WOMAN'S DIVISION.

allowed to give financial aid, even though the countries were at that time allied to Germany and fighting at her side.

Methodism entered Bulgaria in 1857. There are about 22 congregations and 900 church members.

The American School for Girls at Lovetch has long been a notable institution. It was founded in 1882 and has government approval. In 1942 the Nazi-controlled Bulgarian regime took the property as a language school, agreeing to return it at the end of the war. The two American missionaries were allowed to remain. The school normally enrolls about 200 girls.

Methodism has not been strong in these countries and it undoubtedly suffered during the war. The future cannot be predicted until a careful survey discovers the situation and the need.

CASA MATERNA, METHODIST HOME AND ORPHANAGE NEAR NAPLES, ITALY.

Methodism in Italy is indigenous and autonomous. It is represented in most of the cities but its connection with American Methodism is not organic at the present time. It has had a long and devious history.

At one time there were several Methodist schools in Italy but policies after the rise of Mussolini's government forced them to close. But the churches became independent and continued their work under the leadership of an Italian superintendent. Union with the Waldensians or other Protestant groups has been discussed.

One Methodist institution remains—*Casa Materna,* an orphanage with 220 children near Naples. It was taken by the British Red Cross and returned greatly damaged. Catholic attempts to close the institution have been reported.

There are about 15 churches and preachers formerly related to American Methodism. Several preachers had to flee or were imprisoned during the war and some of the congregations were active in the anti-Facist Partisan movement. Seven churches were damaged but all are being used save the church at Turin.

Methodist property was still sequestered by the government at the end of 1945.

Bishop Garber reports that "all Methodists in Italy need food, clothing, and funds." Preachers have received little or nothing and the conference did not meet because there were no funds. A relief society has been set up.

The status of the work in Italy is uncertain. Bishop Garber says the leaders want again to become a conference of The Methodist Church.

Methodist work in North Africa began in 1908 and is carried on in Algeria and Tunisia. Morocco has been allotted to the Methodists also but work has not been opened in that area.

In Algeria there is activity among the French-speaking population, the Arabs, and the Kabyles, a tribe of the native Berbers living in the mountain area of eastern Algeria. Most of the work is institutional in nature, since the resistance of Mohammedanism to Christianity has all but prevented direct evangelism. There are only a few congregations and members.

In the city of Algiers there are homes for Kabyle boys and girls, and a hostel for French girls attending the university. There are also homes for Arab boys and girls in Constantine.

There are two dispensaries in the mountains of Kabylia—at Il Maten and Les Ouidas—and a girls' day school at Il Maten. There are three rural evangelistic centers for the Kabyles, and one among the Arabs. And there are French churches in Algiers, Oran, and Constantine.

In Tunisia there is a dispensary and evangelistic center among the Arabs in the city of Tunis, and a clinic and evangelistic center for Arabs in Sousse.

The work in North Africa has suffered. The missionary staff is depleted, some institutions are closed, and living conditions are severe. There is a scarcity of nearly everything—food, fuel, and clothing. New missionaries are needed and those now on the field need furloughs for recuperation.

WHY

METHODISTS IN EUROPE?

There is great culture in Europe and all the externals of religion—a poor brand, to be sure, but nevertheless centering about Christ. Why should Methodists be there? And why should American Methodists cooperate with and help them? Consider—

1 They actually *are* there, and not because of our initiative in most cases. They arose out of an indigenous evangelical movement and became conferences of The Methodist Church through historical circumstances. They have asked little and have received little from America, but they are parts of the Church and cannot be cast off.

2 The ordinary human sympathy for our brothers in distress obligates us. Here is now the center of the world's misery. A great and terrible need exists, and it is unthinkable that the largest Protestant body in America should fail to help.

3 It is almost certain that a new social order will arise out of the wreckage of the old continental order. Shall it be shot through and through with atheism, suspicion, hatred, and materialism, or permeated with the spirit of tolerance, justice, and fraternity? Our cooperation will do much to determine the future. We can help supply the spiritual appreciation and liberal outlook so essential to the development of the new European society.

4 European nations dominate most of the dependent peoples of the world, in Africa, India, and the islands of the sea, and will do so for many years to come. These non-Christian lands are the center of Protestantism's missionary effort. It is manifestly impossible to win them for a faith unknown to the nations which control them. An essential step in the Christianization of the non-Christian world is the more effective evangelization of Europe.

5 The religious situation in Europe is unsatisfactory. The dominant churches are impotent in the present crisis, not only because they were involved in the destruction of the war, but also because they do not represent the ideologies essential to the rebuilding of the social order. Many are nominally Catholic, but the people have deserted Catholicism by millions. These usually become atheists or nothing. In Northern Europe the churches are connected with the state and subject to a large degree of political control. The free churches are making an indispensable contribution to religious life and thought, and for this purpose alone they should be strengthened.

6 If Christianity is to make its maximum contribution to enduring peace, it must exercise its influence in Europe. Here have arisen most of the wars in history, and the war just ended did not eliminate the hatreds, jealousies, frictions, and problems which gave rise to the conflicts. American Protestantism can do much to develop the spiritual structure on which the peace of the world must rest.

Developments in the European conferences, as elsewhere in the world, abroad and at home, are regularly reported in story and picture in the columns of WORLD OUTLOOK. Keep informed on world affairs by reading every month The Home Magazine of World Methodism.